

NSF \$90,000 Grant to Fund Snowshoe Hare Studies

FAIRBANKS — The University of Alaska here has received a \$90,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to study "Functional Characteristics of Snowshoe Hares During Phases of the 'Ten Year' Population Cycle."

The project is under the direction of Dr. Dale Feist, assistant professor of zoophysiology

at the University's Institute of Arctic Biology.

The grant is to fund the project for two years.

Feist said that observations made over long periods of time have established that every 10 years, snowshoe hares reach a peak in population density, then "crash" precipitously to very low numbers.

The last such peak in the Fairbanks area was in 1964, he said, and another is expected soon.

Feist's project is attempting to determine the causes of the

cycle by studying functional aspects of the hares, particularly physiology, biochemistry and pathology.

"Our approach is oriented towards changes in the endocrine system in response to increasing numbers," he said.

Demographic and reproductive characteristics noted from previous field studies can then be linked with certain functional changes in the animals, he said, hopefully helping explain the population cycle.

Field work is being done in the Fairbanks area.